

Embassy of India

Tokyo

**Opening Remarks by Ambassador Sibi George
at the Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary Celebrations
organized by Embassy of India, Japan
January 12, 2023**

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
A very Good Evening to all of you.

Let me begin by wishing you all, a very happy and healthy New Year 2023 and also Greetings of National Youth Day!

2. It gives me a great pleasure to address you all today, and welcome you all to today's event.

3. Today we commemorate the life of not just an individual but a phenomenon, who cannot be described in just mere words. Swami Vivekananda was a colossal figure in our nation's history who played a leading role in bringing about a new awakening in India. I recall how he inspired my generation when as school children we used to recite his powerful words 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached'. Swami Vivekananda emphasised on the ideals of service and renunciation. His belief in Yuva Shakti was unwavering; which found expression in his iconic saying 'give me 100 believing youth and I shall transform India'. Belief, here, means belief in oneself.

4. I recall the words of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi who said, and I quote: "Our freedom fighters were influenced by Swami Vivekananda. His works have always been effective in instilling nationalism in the youth. Time passed, the country became independent, but we still see Swamiji's influence today. What he said about spirituality, nationalism &

nation building, his thoughts about जनसेवा & जगसेवा flow within us with the same intensity:" Unquote.

Dear Friends,

5. As a young student and later as a diplomat I was fortunate to visit many places associated with the life of Swamiji. The Vivekananda memorial in Kanyakumari, the southernmost point of the Indian peninsula where the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal meet, where Swamiji is believed to have attained his enlightenment. His ancestral home in Kolkata. The site in Chicago where he delivered the historic 1893 address, which is still hailed as the most memorable speech that introduced India's civilizational ethos, our mantra of 'Vasudaiva Kudumbakam' to the Western world. Today this message is being spread across the world when we adopted "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth, One Family, One Future" as the central theme of our G - 20 Presidency.

6. Swamiji's message has spread all across the world. I recall, one of the first places in Switzerland that I visited as India's Ambassador was Saas Fee to pay homage to Swami Vivekananda who travelled to that beautiful town in the Alps Mountain in 1896, where a memorial and a statue of Swamiji stand. One felt so happy to see how Indians and foreigners visit Saas Fee in large numbers to pay homage to him.

7. And today, when we assemble here to celebrate his birth anniversary I recall his visit to Japan in 1893 on his way to Chicago. He reportedly said that "the key to Japan's greatness is the faith of the Japanese in themselves, and their love for their country." You would recall that Hon'ble Prime Minister had referred to the words of Swami Vivekananda in his address to the community in Tokyo last year.

Dear Friends,

8. I am happy that we are unveiling this portrait of Swamiji today at the Embassy. His teachings will continue to influence the lives of every Indian,

whether in India or abroad. This portrait will serve as a reminder to us and also to all visitors to our Mission on the contributions of Swamiji who energized the young people, made them aware and unleashed their creative energies. It will be a reminder for us all on the Indianness that Swamiji embodied which continues to guide and inspire us and continue to inspire millions of our young brothers and sisters.

9. Let me conclude by quoting from Hon'ble Prime Minister's words: "It was Swami Ji who said that the fearless, bold, clean-hearted, courageous & aspirational youth is the foundation on which the future of the nation is built. He always believed on youth and youth power". Unquote.

10. I thank you all for your participation today.
Thank you and good evening.
